Rhetorical Approach to Grant Writing
[Link to Presentation](#)

- **Context**: What are the circumstance for writing and reading?
    - Addressing cultural, institutional, and reader circumstances
        - What is the institutional and external motivation the writer has for sitting down to write?
        - What is the occasion for the reader to sit down to read?
        - How does your project fit in with the funding agency's mission, values, objectives?
        - How does project fit into and impact our broader culture?

- **Audience**: Who are your readers?
    - Addressing experts and non-experts
        - What experience, knowledge, and values do they bring to their reading? Are they experts or not experts?
        - What is common knowledge?
        - What else are they doing? How fast will they be reading your proposal?
        - How can you best market your proposal for your readers?

- **Voice**: What is an effective voice and ethos in this context?
    - Addressing your audience in an effective manner
        - What words, sentences, tone, and style is appropriate for this audience?
        - What are the social rules or expectations for language in this context?
        - How may formal and informal language be useful to achieve your purpose?
        - How can you best assure clarity of your argument and ideas?

- **Purpose**: Why are you writing? What are you trying to achieve with your writing? What are your readers anticipating from your writing?
    - For writers
        - Primary purpose: to promote an idea to a public or private funding agency
        - To be competitive for funding, researchers must demonstrate that their project will make significant contributions to the field and has a high likelihood of success.
    - For readers
        - What are they looking for? How are they reading your proposal? Does the agency provide a rubric?
        - What do your readers value most, overall and in particular sections?

Audience Analysis

Understanding one's audience is one of the most important elements of effective communication. Audience analysis can help writers gain valuable insight about their readers, which can help in the selection and development of a relevant, meaningful topic. It can also help to create a writing plan effectively tailored to a specific audience with appropriate tone, style, language, and content. Be sure to consider how each of these factors may affect readers' attitudes, expectations, and opinions about you and your topic.

Grant readers

As A. H. Schmaier states, "**A grant application is not science; it is the marketing of science**". As a grant writer, you strive for clarity and connection in order to persuade funders to trust, understand, and reward the plan you are proposing. Each of the reviewers should understand your project on a first read, even if they lack expertise in your sub-field. Because funding agencies consider many applications and have a limited amount of grant money, preference is given to projects that have clear aims and methods. Therefore, explain terms that might be unfamiliar to an educated but non-expert audience and avoid excessive use of jargon. The most successful proposals "are written for readers who are scientists but are unfamiliar with the particular article. The prose is kept simple, specialized words and abbreviations are avoided, and every page has at least one diagram or figure. A well-written proposal is written to communicate with all the reviewers, not just those with expertise in the field" (Ogden and Goldberg 21).

Background Analysis

1. Who is my audience? What do my readers have in common? How are they different from one another?
2. What experience, knowledge, and values do they bring to their reading? Are they experts or not experts?
3. What do I have in common with them? How are our experiences and values different?
4. What common knowledge can I assume I share with them? What ideas and terms may need to be supplemented or explained?
5. How can you best market your proposal for your readers?

Disposition Analysis

1. What might my reading audience expect from this document?
2. What might I expect about my readers' attitudes toward me (the writer) and my topic?
3. What concerns or problems do my readers have?
4. What interests and goals do my readers have?
5. What will motivate my readers? What types of needs do they have?
6. What biases or preconceived ideas might my readers have about me and my topic?

Knowledge Analysis

1. How much does my reading audience already know about my topic? What, specifically, do my readers already know about the topic?
2. What can I inform my readers about that they do not already know? What new information would my readers benefit from? How could they use this new information?
3. At what point of sophistication will I be "talking over the heads" of my readers because my information is too complex? At what point of sophistication will I be "insulting the intelligence" of my readers because my information is too simplistic?
4. What questions might my readers have about my topic?

Dissecting Your Argument

A persuasive argument is not just about logic but also about how you connect with your audience through language and evidence. By carefully dissecting your argument into these four components—claim, reason, evidence, and impact—you can craft compelling, well-supported proposals that effectively communicate the importance of your ideas.

Your **claim** is the central point of your proposal and should aim to influence how the reader thinks or acts. A strong claim:

- Clearly communicates its importance.

- Concisely explains how it addresses a specific issue or need.

- Encourages the audience to form their own opinion, even if they may initially disagree.

Tip: Ensure your claim is precise, clear, and relevant to the goals of your proposal.

Reasons support your claim and elevate it beyond mere assertion. They provide justifications for why the claim is valid. Strong reasons are:

- Experiential (pathos), appealing to emotions and personal experiences.

- Ethical (ethos), establishing credibility and trustworthiness.

- Logical (logos), based on evidence and sound reasoning.

Tip: Link reasons to claims using phrases like "because" to create a seamless flow of logic.

Evidence offers challenges and support to the reasons given. Effective evidence aligns with your audience's values and expectations; is specific, relevant, and sufficient to convince the reader; and takes various forms, like statitsics, examples, data, testimonies, and narratives.

- Explain significance: Clarify why the evidence matters, even if it seems obvious.
- Incorporate visuals: Use graphs or diagrams when appropriate to enhance clarity.
- Start general, then go specific: Introduce broad evidence before narrowing in on detailed examples.
- Connect to audience knowledge: Build on what your audience already understands.

Tip: Balance qualitative and quantitative evidence to address both emotional and logical aspects of persuasion.

Impact explains why your argument matters and highlights the broader implications for stakeholders. In grant writing, this component answers:

- "Why does this matter?"
- "How does this affect key stakeholders?"

Tip: Conclude your argument by explicitly stating the significance of your claim and its relevance to your audience. Use phrases like, "This matters because…" or "This will benefit…"

Mentor Texts: Structure & Organization

A *mentor text* is a model of good writing that can help you learn about new or unfamiliar genres. By analyzing how a text is structured and organized, you can gain insights into how to shape your own writing. This activity asks you to "read like a writer", a perspective you can use to plan and organize your own work. You can use this strategy to guide your writing process, from planning how to organize a text to improving specific sections when you're feeling stuck. It can help you find a path to move forward when you're unsure of what to do next. I find this strategy is most useful in the beginning phases of writing, when I am considering how to organize ideas. It helps break down the structure of the mentor text, creating a blueprint you can adapt for your own writing project.

Heads up: You'll need to read through the mentor text at least twice: First, read to understand the content. Read it again to analyze structure, organization, and the author's craft.

Directions:

1. Read the mentor text with a focus on its structure.
2. Create a [reverse outline](https://) (aka backwards outline) by summarizing each paragraph in one sentence.
3. Use the *Structure & Organization Matrix* (next page). Sketch out ideas on how each section would work if applied to your article on the left side. On the right side of the Matrix, brainstorm ideas for how you could apply similar structures to your own article.
4. After you've completed the Matrix, answer the following questions to reflect on how the mentor text is organized.

   a. What do you notice about the length of the text? How does this affect the reader's experience or the message the writer is trying to convey?
   b. Does the writer use headings, titles, charts, images, or graphs? Why are these elements significant in the text's organization or in guiding the reader?
   c. Does the form or format of the text ever change (e.g., shifting from narrative to bullet points)? What purpose do these changes serve?
   d. Are there any unusual or standout features in the text? How do these elements impact your understanding or engagement with the content?
   e. Can you think of other types of writing that use similar structural features? How do these similarities enhance your understanding of the genre?
   f. Which parts of the text have the biggest impact on you as a reader? What do these sections reveal about the writer's main goals or objectives?
   g. How is the content organized? What comes first, next, and last? What effect does this order have on the reader's ability to follow the argument or narrative?
   h. How does the organization of the text help the reader follow the writer's thought process or argument?

Mentor Text: Structure & Organization			
Template Article	# ¶	Your Planned Article	#¶
Citation information		Working title	
Introduction		Introduction	
Conclusion		Conclusion	
Number of Tables		Number of Tables	
Number of Figures		Number of Figures	

Mentor Texts: Author's Craft

Directions: Now that you have considered the content, structure, and organization of your mentor text, it is important to analyze the author's craft. Respond to the following questions for a deep analysis of how the author makes connections, builds an argument, and has an impact on the reader.

1. **What stands out?** After your first read, what part of the text is most impactful or important? This could be an image, a fact, a sentence, or even a single word. What makes it effective to you?

2. **What's the main idea?** What is the main point of the text? Where does the author state it? Quote the key sentence, then explain it in your own words.

3. **How does the writer get the reader's attention?** How does the writer hook the reader in the first few sentences? Describe the strategy they use to engage the reader.

4. **Which details are memorable?** List the details, descriptions, or facts that are surprising, vivid, or important. How does the author draw attention to these details? What techniques are used?

5. **How do the details support the main idea?** Looking at the details you identified in question 4, explain how they help the author reinforce the main idea you described in question 2.

6. **How is the text organized?** What does the author include at the beginning, middle, and end of the text? Would this organization work for your writing project? If so, how might you adapt it?

7. **How does the writer transition between ideas?** How does the writer guide the reader from one section to the next? List any words or phrases that signal transitions or shifts. Which transition techniques are most effective?

8. **How does the piece conclude?** What impression are you left with at the end of the piece? What does the author want you to take away from the text?

9. **What makes the conclusion effective?** What techniques does the author use to make the conclusion stand out? Describe how they wrap up the article.

10. **What techniques and strategies would you like to try?** Which elements from the mentor text would you like to experiment with in your own writing? Which strategies from this text would you like to use in your writing? How can you incorporate these techniques into your work? Why will they'll be effective in your text?

Critical Friends

Peer Review Workshop
for grant writers
February 12th at 3pm

Join us in Joyner 1014 for a small group peer review session facilitated by knowledgeable grant writers and reviewers.

Register for this event at the link below.

ADA Accommodation 252-737-1018 (voice/TTY)

[Register here.](#)

What's Critical Friends?

Critical Friends is a peer review protocol designed to support the development of effective writing strategies and ideas, ensuring clarity and persuasiveness in writing.

Grants are shared in Teams one week before peer review session.

Not currently working on a grant but are planning on submitting one in the near future?
Consider participating as a reader/responder.

Contact Kerri Flinchbaugh (flinchbaughk@ecu.edu) with questions.

Critical Friends

Peer Review Workshop
for Grant Writers
from the Health Sciences

March 19th at 3pm online

Join us online for a small group peer review session facilitated by Laupus Library's Professional Writing Consultant, the University Writing Program, & Laupus Liaisons.

Register for this event at the link below.

ADA Accommodation 252-737-1018 (voice/TTY)

[Register here.](#)

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Faculty Writing Retreat
Spring Break 2025

The University Writing Program is offering this opportunity as a cost-share partnership between our program and either the faculty member's department or the writer.

Trinity Center at Pine Knoll Shores, NC
March 9-12th or March 12-15th

Registration for the retreat this year is $235 (3 nights) or $160 (2 nights).

For additional information, please contact Kerri Flinchabugh (flinchbaughk@ecu.edu).
ADA Accommodation 252-737-1018 (voice/TTY)

[Link to application](#).